

Message Text

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AMCONSUL NAPLES

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USDOCOSOUTH

SHAPEUSNR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 13247

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF PSI SECRETARY CRAXI

1. I MET WITH THE NEW PSI SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI ON AUGUST 12. CRAXI IS A YOUNG (42), INTELLIGENT, AND ENERGETIC. HE MAKES A GOOD IMPRESSION AND HE APPEARS TO HAVE THE STATURE NEEDED FOR HIS JOB. IT WAS REFRESHING TO FIND HIM PRAGMATIC AND VERY MUCH DOWN TO EARTH IN HIS APPROACH TO PROBLEMS, IN CONTRAST TO THE IDEOLOGICAL CANT THAT IS COMMON AMONG SOME SOCIALISTS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE MEETING WAS ESSENTIALLY A GET-
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ACQUAINTED ONE, HIS COMMENTS IN THE COURSE OF OUR

CONVERSATION CLEARLY INDICATED HIS COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY AND THE WEST AND HIS ANTAGONISM TO COMMUNISM. WITH REGARD TO THE PCI, HE SAID THAT IT HAS CHANGED IN SOME WAYS OVER THE YEARS AND THAT, WHILE HE HOPES IT WILL CONTINUE TO CHANGE IN THE DIRECTION OF BECOMING A LIBERAL, DEMOCRATIC AND WESTERN PARTY, IT HAS NOT ARRIVED THERE YET. IN HIS VIEW IT MUST (AND WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT DURING AT LEAST THE TERM OF THE PRESENT LEGISLATURE (FIVE YEARS), BEYOND WHICH TIME PREDICTIONS ON ANY ASPECT OF ITALIAN POLITICS ARE NOT WORTH MUCH. HE ADDED THAT, ALTHOUGH IT IS HARD FOR AN OUTSIDER TO SEE, THERE APPEARS TO BE SERIOUS TURMOIL WITHIN THE PCI AT THE MOMENT.

3. CRAXI THINKS THAT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WILL LAST WELL BEYOND THE END OF THE YEAR, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE AND IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF ALL OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS TO SEE TO IT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SURVIVES. THE PCI HAS TRANSLATED ITS GAINS IN THE LAST ELECTIONS INTO IMPORTANT ADVANCES IN TERMS OF ACCEPTANCE WITHIN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM, AND WOULD NOT RISK LOSING THOSE ADVANTAGES. THUS, IT MUST, FOR EXAMPLE, SUPPORT THE DC ON THE BASIC ECONOMIC AUSTERITY LEGISLATION, WHICH WILL BE AN UNPLEASANT AND UNWELCOME CHOICE FOR THE PCI WHICH HAS ALWAYS MANAGED TO AVOID SUCH ACTS OF "RESPONSIBILITY". BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE ABSTAINING LAY PARTIES KNOW THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE THAT DOES NOT HAVE MAJOR RISKS FOR THEM. THEY WILL, THEREFORE, DO NOTHING THAT WOULD THREATEN TO BRING DOWN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT.

4. WHEN ASKED ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR A LAY ALLIANCE, CRAXI RESPONDED THAT SUCH AN ALLIANCE IS OBVIOUSLY DESIRABLE IF THE LAY PARTIES ARE TO SURVIVE AND COUNT FOR SOMETHING. BUT, HE SAID, AT THE PRESENT ALL THREE ARE BESET BY INTERNAL TROUBLES WHICH MAKE FORWARD MOVEMENT TOWARD A WORKABLE ALLIANCE DIFFICULT. LITTLE CAN BE DONE UNTIL THE TWO OLD MEN (LA MALFA AND SARAGAT) RETIRE. APART FROM THEM, THE PSDI HAS SERIOUS

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INTERNAL FRICTIONS AND IS STILL SUFFERING FROM TANASSI'S APPARENT GUILT IN THE LOCKHEED AFFAIRS, WHICH WILL AGAIN BE HEADLINE NEWS AS THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION RESUMES ITS WORK. HE WAS EMPHATIC IN SAYING THAT TO WORK WITH THE PRI IS DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF THEIR INTELLECTUAL ARROGANCE AND READINESS TO TELL EVERYONE HOW BEST TO RUN HIS AFFAIRS. THE PROBLEM IS COMPLICATED BY LA MALFA'S PROFOUND PESSIMISM.

5. CRAXI EXPRESSED REGRET THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN
ABLE TO CARRY OUT HIS PLANNED VISIT TO THE US LAST
MAY BECAUSE OF THE ELECTIONS. HE SAID HE HOPED TO BE
ABLE TO MAKE A VISIT NEXT SPRING AND I ENCOURAGED HIM
IN THE IDEA. HE ALSO INDICATED INTEREST IN IVP
VISITS FOR SOME PSI PARLIAMENTARIANS. WE AGREED TO
DISCUSS THE LATTER SUBJECT IN MORE DETAIL AFTER THE
SUMMER RECESS.VOLPE

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